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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7433  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4480  
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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6183  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7095  
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RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1703  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000389

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ENVR](#) [ASEC](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: SENATE PRESIDENT CALLS FOR INT'L HELP

REF: A. LA PAZ 386  
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 374

Classified By: CDA Krishna Urs for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Senate President and opposition leader Oscar Ortiz on March 12 publicly called on the diplomatic community to "remain engaged" and encourage the Morales administration to negotiate in good faith regarding the new constitution's implementation, Congress' role during the transition period, and upcoming national elections. Ortiz and other opposition senators asked for help in strengthening the electoral rolls and said they planned to file a case with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the invasion of former Vice President Cardenas' home. Ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party dissident Senator Guido Guardia stated flatly that Morales did not represent the country's indigenous population. End summary.

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International Audience  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Responding to an invitation from Senate President Oscar Ortiz, Charge d'Affaires Urs attended on March 12 a presentation by Ortiz, Podemos Senator Luis Vasquez, Podemos Senator Tito Hoz de Vila, and MAS Senator (and dissident) Guido Guardia, among others to discuss "certain themes related to the difficult political situation Bolivia is going through." Ortiz invited a wide range of the diplomatic community and members of international organizations to attend the meeting. Attendees included representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Peru, South Korea, and the Vatican, as well as members of the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS).

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Election Monitoring  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Ortiz called on the international community to play a positive role in the ongoing negotiations over the implementation of the new constitution and in the mechanics of the proposed December 6 national elections. He noted that

the international community had "helped us negotiate compromises" in the past year and said that while he didn't "want to be controversial" it was clear the government was not keeping its promises.

¶4. (SBU) Senator Hoz de Vila said the opposition was very concerned with the mechanics of the upcoming elections, focusing on suspect electoral rolls. (Note: In its report on the August 2008 revocatory referendum, the OAS gave the rolls an overall clean bill of health, but noted significant issues with the civil registry and other elements that inform the electoral rolls. End note.) He reviewed how the National Electoral Court (CNE) had said in late 2008 that the electoral rolls could not be updated before the January 25 constitutional referendum but that they would be either significantly updated or redone completely before the December 2009 elections. Now, he noted, international groups including the UN have cast doubt on this timeline, and the CNE is now saying it will not update the electoral rolls after all. Hoz de Vila said he spoke with CNE leaders and extracted a pledge that the CNE would speak with donor countries and institutions to review the situation further. He asked that all those contacted by the CNE encourage the Court to do whatever it can to upgrade the electoral rolls before the elections.

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Congress Dormant?  
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¶5. (SBU) Senator Vasquez responded to a question regarding the Congress' role during and after the current transition period. He was asked if he agreed with the view that Congress' only role is to pass transition legislation defining the parameters of the upcoming elections, and that after this, according to the MAS, the Congress would essentially become dormant until the seating of the new Plurinational Assembly in January 2010. Vasquez disagreed with this view, saying that while the name might change, there will always be a need for a legislative branch and particularly during this time. He pledged the Congress would keep working throughout the transition period.

¶6. (SBU) Ortiz discussed the mechanics of the transition legislation, saying informational hearings would begin next week, after which there would be negotiations with the administration over draft legislation. Ortiz again called on all concerned international actors to "keep their eyes" on the process, because he believed the MAS would attempt to push their legislation through and avoid compromise. He said the MAS "were not honest negotiators," noting that they had not yet taken the CNE's proposed election law into consideration in preparing the MAS version.

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Human Rights Violations  
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¶7. (SBU) Ortiz also discussed the March 7 invasion and ransacking of former Vice President Cardenas' home (Reftel A and B). He said he planned to file a case with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the incident and also regarding the March 3 takeover of former MAS Congress member Marlene Paredes' property in the Yungas (Reftel A).

¶8. (C) Spanish Deputy Chief of Mission Ricardo Llosa told Charge that the European Union delivered a demarche directly to Foreign Minister regarding the need to ensure Cardenas' protection and halt the illegal seizure of his property.

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MAS Not Indigenous Party  
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¶9. (SBU) Dissident MAS Senator Guido Guardia took the floor to denounce the Morales administration. He characterized the administration as leftist but as "nothing new," and said they

did not have solidarity with the indigenous population. He said there was a mistaken perception that the party was progressive and a positive change, but that instead of being a break with the past, the MAS was "of the past."

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Comment  
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¶10. (C) Senator Ortiz's office delivered the invitation to this event only hours before it started. The meeting itself was relatively informal, with a wide range of questions and answers among the participants. While post is sensitive to making public appearances with the opposition that could be taken as being "too involved" in the country's political affairs, this event was attended by several foreign Ambassadors and was far from a formal hearing or strategy session. End comment.  
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